



Baltimore-Washington Conference

The United Methodist Church

NORTHWOOD-APPOLD UMC

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SB 422 SUPPORT

Chairman; Will Smith and Committee Members
Judicial Proceedings Committee

Dear Chairman Will Smith and Members of the Committee,

Senate Bill 422 would demonstrate a use of public policy that works in the best interest of creating a more equitable future. It's been said in both word and song that the "children are the future." Regrettably for decades the missteps of youth who happen to be of color are judged far more harshly than those of their peers. As a result, their futures are jeopardized by policies that exempt them from redemption. I believe it is the purpose of our policy makers to see the potential and the opportunity for creating a more just society. SB 422 stands in the gap between historical bias and communal grace. SB 422 seeks to extend a welcome form of Just Mercy.

The policy of trying, convicting, and sentencing children as adults is fundamentally flawed and has had devastating effects on many families, particularly within African American communities. Maryland can send a message to the broader society that all of our children have equal value. The punitive mindset that promotes the notion of "adult crime, adult time" has led to serious consequences, most notably the loss of judicial discretion. This law has become a blunt instrument that disregards the unique circumstances of youth. Many states have recognized the harms of this practice and successfully rescinded it out of compassion for the individuals and families affected. We are better than this and so are our children.

While we acknowledge the necessity of accountability for young people, we must also recognize that many lack positive influences and resources. Compassion should guide us in allowing judges the discretion to determine the appropriate venue for young offenders, whether juvenile or adult court, on a case-by-case basis.

I urge your support of SB 422 for the sake of a better future for all children. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Rev. Dr. Kevin A. Slayton, Sr.
Pastor

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BECOMING FULLY ALIVE IN CHRIST AND MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN A DIVERSE AND EVER-CHANGING WORLD